

Rep. John Campbell, R-Newport Beach, was among those caught off guard this morning by Sen. Arlen Specter's decision to leave the Republican Party and join the Democrats. If Democrat Al Franken is awarded a disputed Senate seat, Specter's move will give Senate Democrats a filibuster-proof majority and enable bills to pass without any GOP support.

Specter made the move because it appeared, thanks to votes that upset conservatives, that he had inadequate support to win his Republican primary next year.

"I was surprised because there was no indication - there were no rumors," Campbell said. "But it's one of those things where after you hear it, it starts to make sense. As a Republican, he was probably going to lose. Now he has a better chance to keep his seat."

Campbell said he wasn't sure that the Democrats gaining a filibuster-proof majority would make a big difference in policy.

"The way Obama's acted, he didn't care about our votes anyway. He seems disinterested in what Republicans think."

Rep. Loretta Sanchez, D-Garden Grove, predictably had a different take.

"Sen. Specter is known to be a man of integrity and independence, and his decision to depart the Republican Party is a clear cut sign that the GOP is further out-of-touch with the viewpoints of the American people," Sanchez said.

Scott Baugh, chairman of the Republican Party of Orange County, agreed with Campbell that the move probably won't change the legislation coming out of the Senate.

"Whether Arlen Specter is a Democrat or a registered Republican voting like a Democrat doesn't really make that much difference," Baugh said. "I'm slightly disappointed, but depending on Specter is like walking with your foot out of joint."